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PASS

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By M. Sanford, R. Caire

Historic Paintings by Sanford

Text, photos by Caire

copr., 1980, M. Sanford & R. Caire

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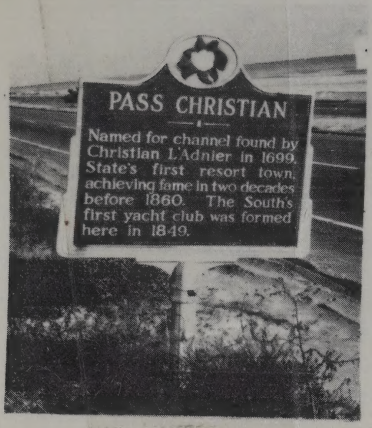
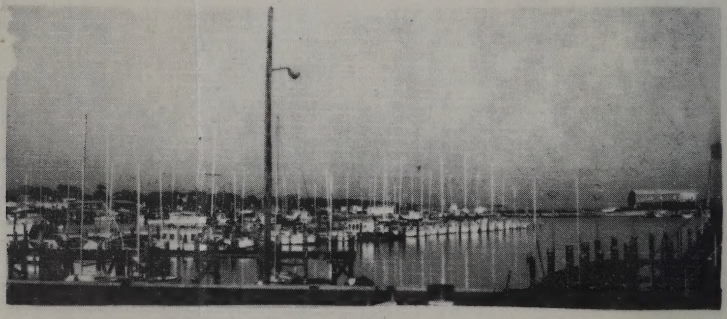

PASS CHRISTIAN
Named for channel found by Christian L'Adnier in 1699. State's first resort town, achieving fame in two decades before 1860. The South's first yacht club was formed here in 1849.

This state historical marker is inaccurate. L'Adnier (real name Nicholas Christiano or Christiana) came to the coast from New Orleans in the early 1700's.

The first known inhabitants of the Pass Christian area were the Choctaw Indians.

Indian legend has it that the Choctaws migrated on foot from the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico in a split of the Mayan nation. The artisans and scholars split with the more warlike faction and migrated on foot across Mexico and up the Texas coast to the Mississippi River. They were guided by a sacred pole which appeared in the center of camp each night. In the morning, the pole would lean in the direction for travel that

The harbor at Pass Christian has been the heartbeat of the Pass since the establishment of the community.



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The past at the Pass /
Pass Christian, Miss. : Lafa c1980.

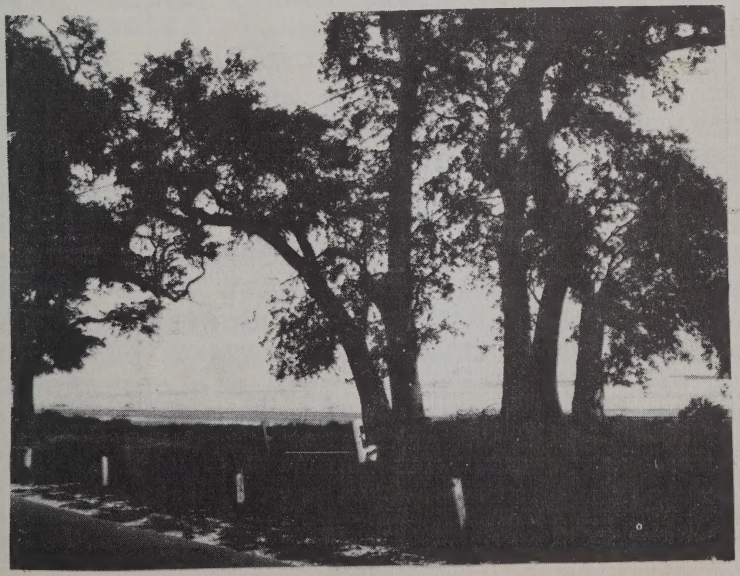
day. The trek continued for 43 years after which they reached the west bank of a great river. The medicine man gave the river the name of "Misha Sipokin" (Mississippi) -- beyond the ages, The Father of Waters. On the banks of the river, the tribe split into two bodies, each following a great leader. One was known as Chahtat (Choctaw) and the other was called Chicasah (Chicasaw).

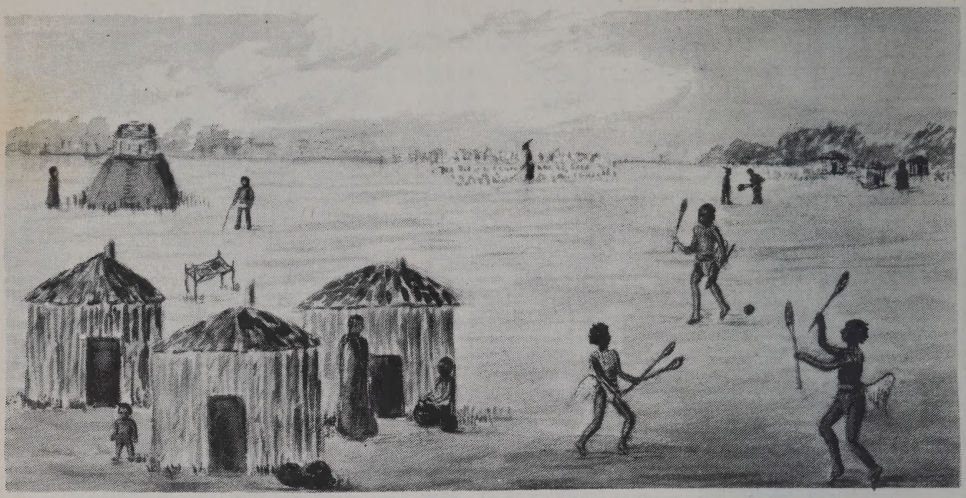
The Choctaws settled central and east Mississippi and southern Mississippi. The Chicasaws traveled to and settled in north Mississippi and part of Tennessee.

Known as the "Mound Builders", these Indians soon made their industry and culture known in North America. They introduced many items of obvious Mayan origin into barter with various tribes almost to the Great Lakes, initiating a prosperous, vigorous economy.

From this transplanted Mayan civili-

The view from War Memorial Park is spectacular looking out over the Mississippi Sound.





The first known inhabitants of the area were Choctaw Indians, who migrated on foot from Yucatan, Mexico, part of the Mayan nation.

zation, we have gained some of the key agricultural products of America: (corn) maize, cotton, squash, beans, and potatoes. They manufactured margarine from cacao seeds.

Many Indian relics were to be found near Pass Christian and in nearby Hancock County. Some Indian mounds have been leveled by developers.

It is doubtful if DeSoto, Father Marquette, or LaSalle ever came as far south as Pass Christian in their explorations of southern America.

In 1699, French-Canadian Pierre LeMoyne, Sieur d'Iberville, led an expedition from France and landed on the Mississippi Gulf Coast at Old Biloxi (Ocean Springs). It was during western explorations that year that a party of his men, including the royal cartographer, Compte DeLisle, established a permanent settlement at the bluffs at Bay St. Louis and explored the Bay of St. Louis and surrounding lands for the first time for any white man.

Oxen traveled to the Pass down Red Creek Road, bringing the commerce of the countryside.

All of the lands around Bay St. Louis were granted by the French King to Madam Mezieres. She apparently did not develop her claim on the east because the Spanish King later issued a claim for the Pass Christian peninsula to the Widow Asmard. When she died in 1796, her will left what is now downtown Pass Christian (800 arpents) to Charlo Asmard (The family name was changed later to Charlot). The largest part of the peninsula was left to her nephew, Bartholomew Pellegrin. Some land between Bayou Portage and Bayou Johnson was left to her slaves, a family named Labat.

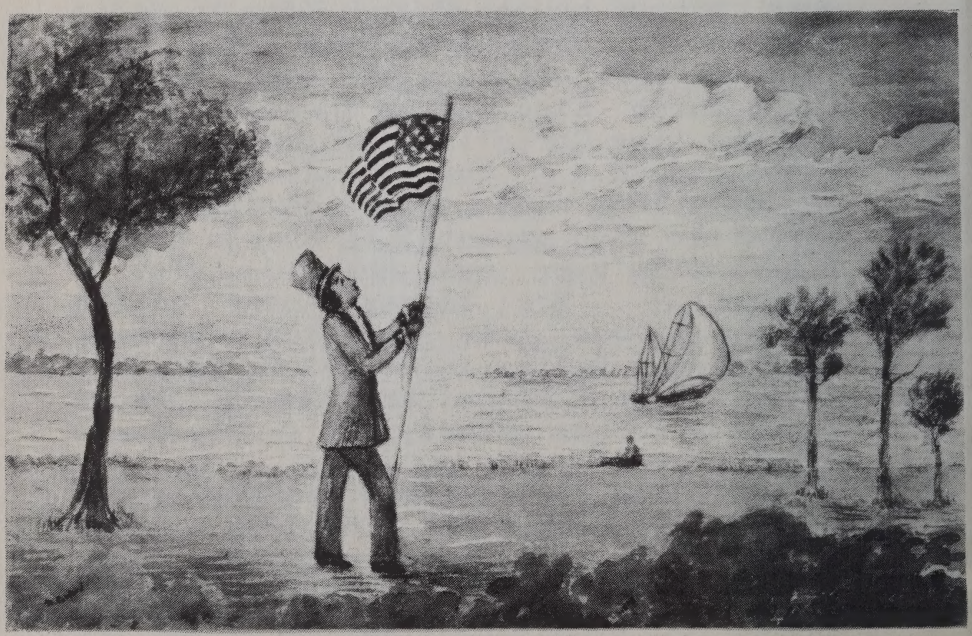
There was little development on the peninsula except on Charlo's land. Pellegrin's land was a palmetto farm. Charlo's land ran from the Mississippi Sound to Asmard St. on the north and

near City Hall to past the VFW hall on the east.

When Dr. Flood raised the American Flag as Governor Claiborne's envoy in 1811 at the instructions of President Madison to take possession of the Mississippi Gulf Coast before the British or the Spanish seized the land, he actually raised the flag on his passing sloop, the Alligator. The settlement at Pass Christian was too small to warrant a stop. French and Canadian-French settlers had settled north of the Pass on Bayou DeLisle and Wolf River, but the first known settlers in Pass Christian were six of Pirate Lafitte's men who gained pardons from Andrew Jackson for fighting in the Battle of New Orleans in 1815.

Meanwhile, Nicholas Christiano (an Italian) moved from his sawmill on Bayou St. John at New Orleans to tend his cattle on Cat Island offshore from the

Dr. **Flood** shows the colors at the Pass when he claimed the Mississippi Gulf Coast for the U.S.



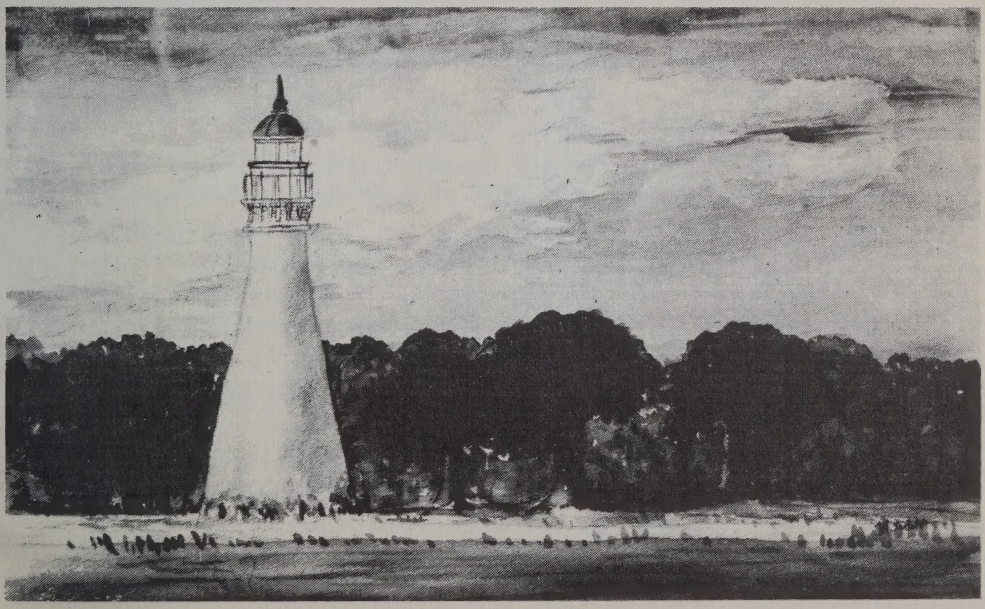
Pass. During the English rule (1763-1780), he went to Mobile to register his claim to Cat Island. He took the assumed name of Christian Ladner (L'Adnier) for this purpose, and the family has used that name ever since. Christiano named the deep pass just offshore Pass Christian (pronounced Chris-t-ian). The deep pass further offshore he named Pass Marianne for his wife, Marianne Patier.

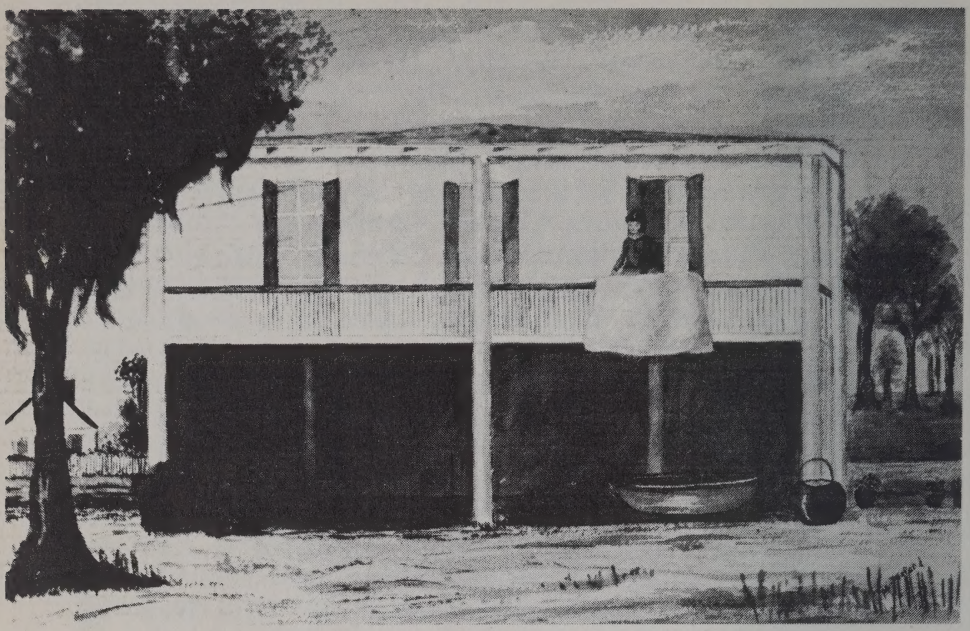
In 1781, Juan de Cuevas, a Spanish soldier, married Christiano's daughter while he was stationed at Pensacola. He moved to Cat Island and lived with the Ladners.

The Pass Christian area was used as a staging area for Andy Jackson's troops under General Wade Hampton for U.S. thrusts at Pensacola before the Battle of New Orleans.

When the British fleet landed at Ship Island in the War of 1812, the young

The lighthouse at the Pass was at the present site of the City Hall.



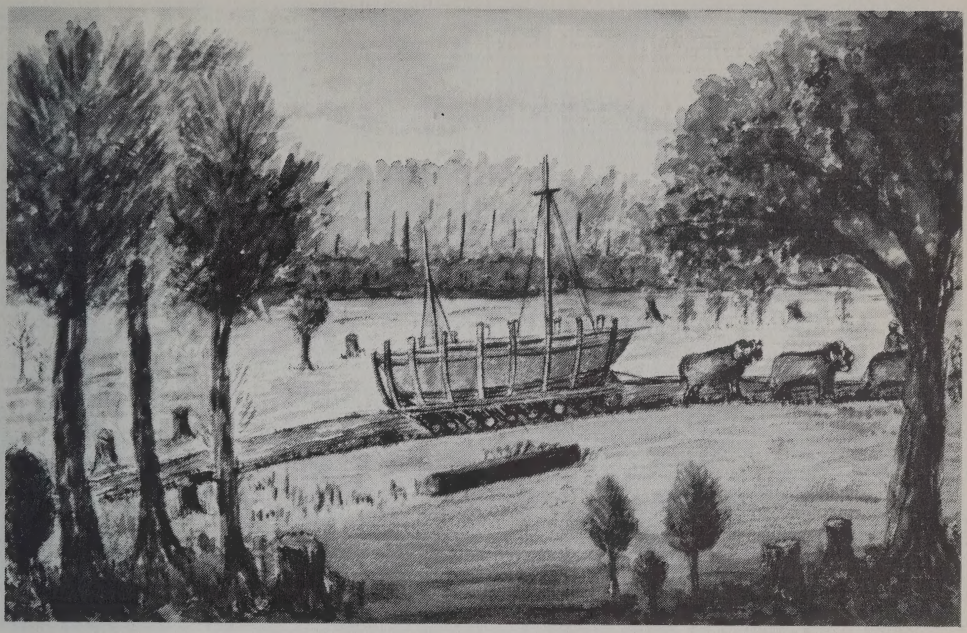


The famed "bedsheet surrender" of the Civil War came when Mrs. Jane Murphy Manders hung bedsheets from her home to prevent further shelling of the town by Union gunboats.

American naval forces fought the first part of the engagement in small boats along the coast from the Bay of St. Louis in December, 1814. They succeeded in slowing down the British.

Juan Cuevas had been captured by the British on Cat Island, but he convinced the British that he was an ignorant lout and knew nothing of the passage to New Orleans. When released, he immediately sent word of the British presence to General Jackson at New Orleans.

Jackson's victory over the British at New Orleans in January, 1815, is well known in history. The battle was actually waged after the end of the war as the Treaty of Ghent had already been signed, but news did not reach the area until the last day of the battle, brought

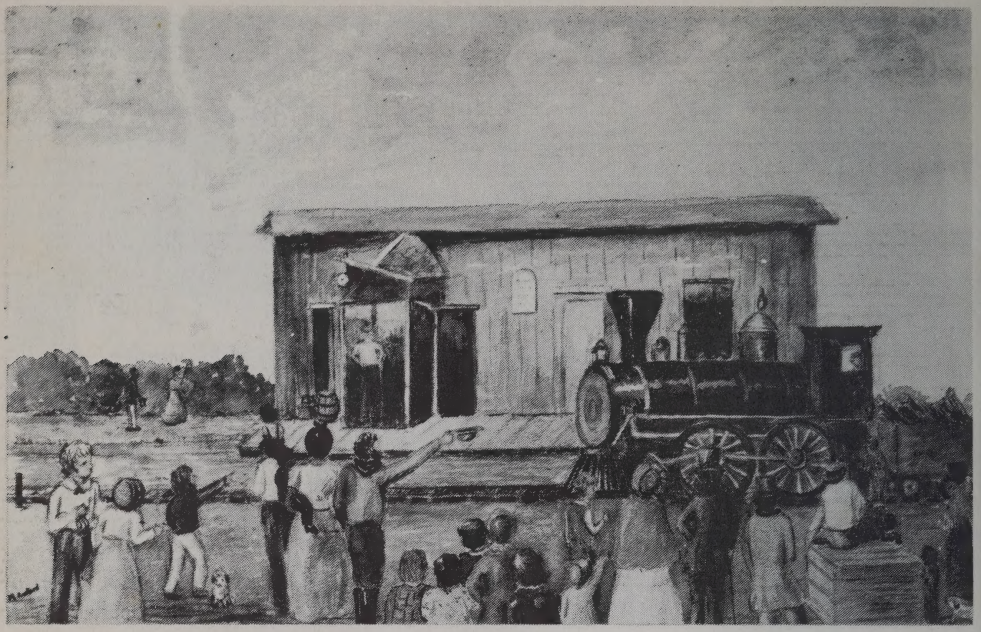


This schooner took a strange overland trip from Wolf River to the Biloxi River to escape Union pursuit.

by Mississippi's forgotten hero, Sam Dale, by horseback from Georgia.

The names of Lafitte's six ex-pirates who settled at Pass Christian are not known, but it was the real beginning of the Pass community. Charlot gradually sold off plots from his 800 arpents, but the community was limited to his land entirely since Pellegrin would not sell any land.

In 1837, John Henderson, former U. S. Senator from Mississippi, purchased Pellegrin's land from the widow of Edward Livingston, an attorney who was a Cabinet member under President Jackson, and began the real development of Pass Christian. The Pass was still part of Hancock County when the first city government was chartered in 1838. Harrison County was subsequently formed, in



The first train came to the Pass in 1869 on the New Orleans - Mobile route.

1841, and the feud between west Harrison County and Biloxi began.

This was the era of the steamboat, and Henderson soon brought families who built cottages (mansions) on the water-front.

Commerce had developed on Red Creek Road from south central Mississippi via oxen cart. The present VFW hall at Scenic Drive and Fleitas Avenue was an open warehouse for storage of wool. Timber was floated from the beach at the White Harbor area just east of the Pass city limits. The log rafts were floated to Pass Marianne, Mississippi's first deep water port. Pass Christian was the largest trading center on the Mississippi Gulf Coast until the early 1900's.

It was during the era from 1840 until the Civil War that the Pass first became

A typical street scene in the Pass in the late 1800's.

famous as a resort area. Families from New Orleans and nearby Mississippi cities enjoyed the beach and salt water bathing and lived an elaborate social life, with travel via the steamboat.

Three churches came into being, the St. Paul Methodist Church (black), Trinity Episcopal Church, and St. Paul Catholic Church, in the 1800's. The Catholic cemetery was established in 1850, while Trinity Episcopal's Live Oak Cemetery was established in 1851 on land donated by John Henderson and his wife. An earlier cemetery is the old "Indian Cemetery" located off Church Street north of the L & N Railroad tracks.

When the Civil War began in 1861, Pass Christian was drained of men of the military age, and only a home guard was left. Confederate troops trained at the

845 E. Scenic Drive. Built in 1850 by P. B. McCutchon. The building, originally a raised cottage with open space underneath, was altered in the 1830's.

Pass near the present Miramar Nursing Home. In December, 1861, Union General Butler landed on Ship Island and began conquest of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Pass Christian came under bombardment by Union ships, and the famed bedsheet surrender took place in April, 1862, when Mrs. Jane Murphy Manders waved bedsheets from her waterfront home to prevent further shelling of the town. The home guard had already deserted during the shelling. Union troops occupied the town and did great economic damage. There were some public schools prior to the War, but the present system began in 1868. The Catholic School was begun in 1876 by the Sisters of Mercy.

243 E. Scenic Drive. Built about 1856 by the Saucier family.

The opening of the railroad (1869) along the coast from Mobile to New Orleans brought the first measure of returning prosperity to the town after the economic privations of Carpetbagger rule following the War. The railroad brought the second boom to the Pass, the largest boom experienced until the World War II boom.

Luxurious hotels were built (Mexican Gulf Hotel, Lynn Castle, Crescent Hotel, New Magnolia Hotel (Miramar site).) The Pass had 8,000 winter visitors in 1900. The Christian Brothers' College operated until Yellow Fever decimated the teacher brothers (1865-1875). Trinity School for girls later occupied the old Miramar site used by the Christian Brothers' school. From 1886 to 1893, the school flourished as the P. C. Institute. The first known college band in America was organized at Christian College and gave public concerts.

Construction of the railroad from Jackson, Mississippi in the early 1900's to the newly created port city of Gulfport ended the Pass as a great port city

551 E. Scenic Drive. Built in 1839 by Luciene Labranche, the lighthouse keeper. Has been expanded.

as the north-south railroad siphoned off the commerce from Red Creek Road.

The tourist boom continued until two hotels burned in a short time (Mexican Gulf, Lynn Castle) in 1916-17. As a result the city purchased the first fire engine in 1917.

The Town Library was established by the Ladies Library Association in 1893 and moved to the present location on East Scenic in 1905, where it still operates.

In 1904 the first large seafood plant came into being and Pass Christian was established as a major seafood shipping center.

The former Miramar Hotel was built in the late 1910's, and the Garden Club was begun in the 1920's. The Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1923. In 1930 the Pass Christian carnival was reorganized and became the fund-raising means for the Catholic school.

The real era of the auto began in 1928 when the first auto bridge was built over the Bay of St. Louis. Land

218 E. Second St. Built about 1833 by Raymond Lizana. Was originally located on East Scenic Drive.

for a city park near Menge Avenue and North Street was donated by Horace White in the 1930's. The first deep sea fishing rodeo on the Mississippi Coast was held at Pass Christian in 1925.

The Depression years in the 1930's collapsed the boom that had carried the Pass economy well after World War I. Only the presence of seafood for the taking kept many Pass families alive during the Depression. In 1944 War Memorial Park was established.

World War II brought returning prosperity to the Pass. The Merchant Marine established a school at nearby Henderson Point, and service men in training on the Coast found Pass Christian a wonderful recreation place. The Pass harbor had gradually been improved until it became a major port for both fishing craft and pleasure boats.

Following the 1947 hurricane the Pass Christian Yacht Club (founded 1893), moved from the old "Bedsheet Surrender" house into new quarters at the SE tip of the harbor, since the construction of the new four-lane highway was taking their building (located between Scenic

120 W. Scenic Drive. Built about 1848.

Drive and the new U. S. 90). The former seafood plant quonset building was utilized for the Yacht Club headquarters. The building was considered "hurricane proof".

Another boom boosted the Pass economy so far as real estate was concerned, but the retail business establishment continued to decline. The once active downtown business section of Pass Christian gradually shrank and shrank, while more and more residences were built in the area.

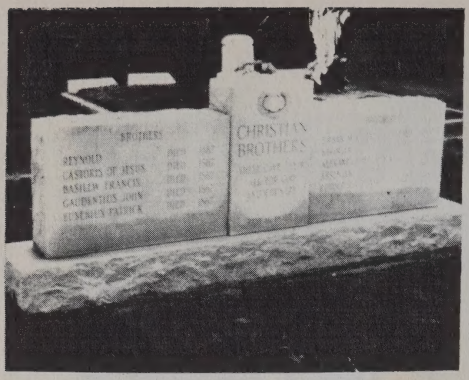
Hurricane Camille, August 17, 1969, changed everything in one wild night. 200-plus mile winds and tidal surges battered the front and waters from Bay St. Louis overflowed all streams north of the Pass and flooded over the railroad tracks. Only the ridge along East Second Street from Seal Ave. east was not under water that fatal night. Over 200 residents died, and more than 80% of all structures in the city limits were either destroyed or received major damage. The waterfront was wiped out---

The oldest structure in the Pass. It was originally an open warehouse for storage of wool. Corner Fleitas and Scenic Drive, home of VFW post.

harbor, yacht club, highway, piers---everything.

The strange mixture of generosity and greed after Hurricane Camille is hard to describe. Looters moved into the area as early as 5 a.m. the morning after the hurricane, and the National Guard finally had to be stationed in the area. At the same time, people shared food and clothing with perfect strangers in a spirit of common misery. The Salvation Army proved to be the real heroes to many with rolling food canteens offering food and beverages. They later erected a circus tent at the ball park to give out emergency clothing and supplies since there was no suitable building available for the purpose. Eventually, food was served to all at the Pass Hi cafeteria since there were no food stores and no gas or electricity for cooking for many weeks.

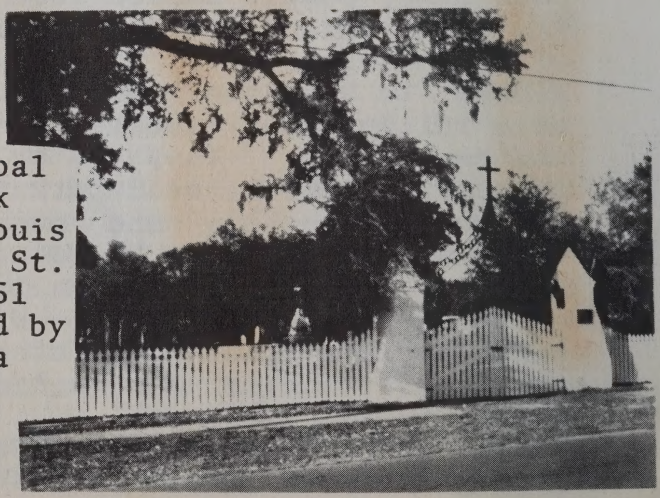
The re-building of Pass Christian is a long story in itself, and this history



Common tomb of Christian Brothers struck down by Yellow Fever in 1867. They operated the Christian Brothers College at the Pass.

will not attempt to give all the details. The Pass did get a new City Hall, an improved harbor, a public library, and some other benefits from the storm, but the cost to individuals was staggering in money and lives and health. Public schools were rebuilt and improved. Government-furnished house trailers housed many families while they struggled to rebuild their homes.

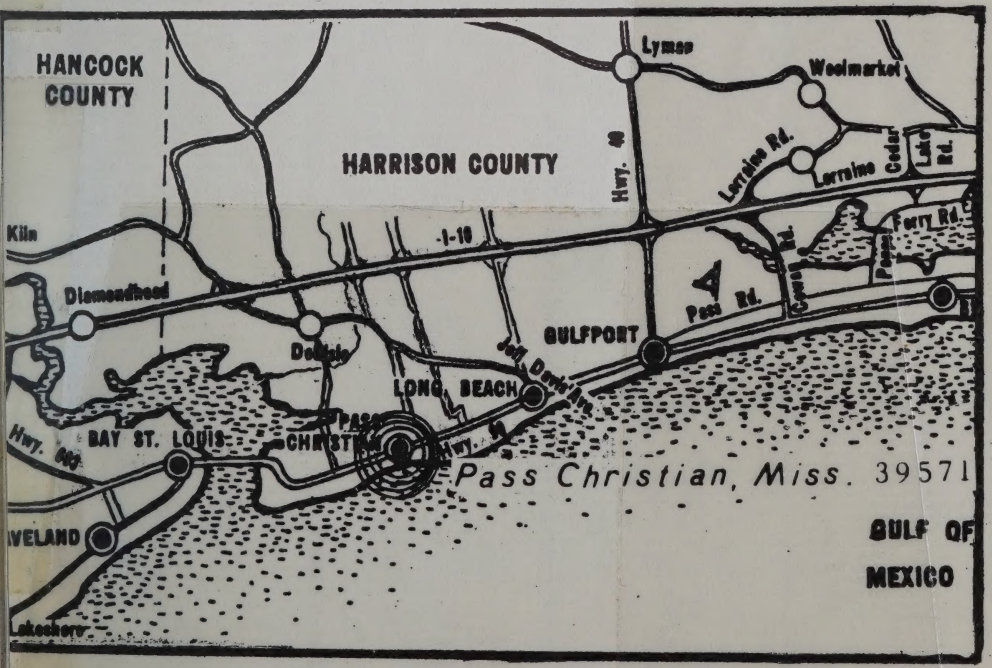
Gradually the Pass recovered from the damage of Hurricane Camille, and in 1976 Pass Christian joined the rest of the



Trinity Episcopal Church Live Oak Cemetery, St Louis St. and Church St. Established 1851 on land donated by John and Louisa Henderson.

nation in celebrating America's Bi-Centennial. There was a reenactment of Dr. Flood showing the colors at the Pass with full ceremonies.

Entire set of nine original historic paintings in color available for sale as a set only. Contact Mrs. Robb Sanford, Pass Christian, Miss. for details.



Publication Date, 1976 CATALOG ----- 1979 - 1980 ———

HISTORY OF PASS CHRISTIAN, by R. J. and Katy Caire

96 pages and cover, paperback. History of Pass Christian, Ms., through July 4, 1976. Many pages of illustrations. $5.50.

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